

'82 cents: How to tell the zincks from the coppers

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about the world's greatest hobby.

Q—I've received dozens of 1982 Lincoln cents in change. How can I tell if they are made with copper or zinc?—T.L., Chicago.

A—Several collectors have devised a simple yet surefire method of detection.

Create a makeshift balance by placing a pencil under a ruler [the pencil goes at the center, of course, making the ends of the ruler "in balance"]. Put a known copper cent at one end of the ruler—almost any Lincoln penny dated 1981 or earlier would do just fine—and a suspect coin at the other. If the ruler still is in balance, your suspect 1982 cent is copper; if not, the coin is zinc. Remember, copper Lincolns are about 20 percent heavier.

Q—Why would a 1982 dime missing a mint mark be worth as much as \$125 when a Lincoln cent missing small letters [such as in the words "E Pluribus Unum"] are "quite common," to quote from your column?—S.A., Urbana.

A—It's a matter of supply and demand. Government engravers created this dime error by forgetting to punch a mint mark into just one die, an almost unheard of blooper. No trace of a mint letter appears above the date, even under high magnification.

Uncle Sam's top-speed coinage process occasionally produced coins with missing small letters. Grease and other foreign matter ooze onto the coin dies, preventing all design features from "striking up." The missing letters usually are faintly visible under a magnifying glass.

Q—How do I go about getting a misprinted \$1 bill authenticated and evaluated?—R.W., Blue Island.

A—Coin dealers who specialize in misprints would be willing to examine your keepsake free of charge. Check the telephone book for locations of shops in your neighborhood, but call before you visit to determine the dealer's interest.

For names and addresses of prominent specialists nationally, read the advertisements in *Coin World* or other hobby publications, especially the "Wanted—paper money" classifieds.

Q—I've been asking bank tellers for Eisenhower dollars without success. Somebody must be sitting on a cache. Is there an armored car company or bank that serves as a clearinghouse for those coins? I'd like to complete my collection.—K.D., Chicago.

A—The government minted Ike dollars from 1971 to 1978; as a noncurrent coin, they aren't readily available at most banks. However, many dealers have dozens in stock, with most varieties at reasonable prices.